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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EU](#) [LO](#)  
SUBJECT: SMER CRITICIZED BY EUROPEAN SOCIALIST ALLIES  
REF: BRATISLAVA 532

Classified By: CDA Lawrence R. Silverman for reasons  
1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Despite his preference for the European over the transatlantic relationship, new Slovak PM Robert Fico now finds himself losing friends among presumed European allies due to his party's coalition with the ultra-nationalist SNS. The Party of European Socialists (PES) has threatened Smer's membership in the socialists' club. Smer's private letter of justification to the socialists fell on deaf ears. The conservative MEP faction and others have called for a formalized monitoring of developments in Slovakia. While enduring this initial sting of rejection from his European allies, Fico must work hard to ensure his new partners don't cause further damage to his credibility. END SUMMARY.

#### SMER'S JUSTIFICATION

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12. (C) In a private letter from Smer to the PES, Smer justified its decision to partner with SNS and HZDS in Slovakia's new governing coalition by arguing that it had no other choice. The letter describes one-by-one why none of the other parliamentary parties were acceptable. Smer rejected KDH as a partner because KDH's own internal rift would create instability within a ruling coalition. Smer also cited as problematic the length of time KDH needed to announce a willingness to rule with Smer, though in the end Smer's governing coalition took office in a record two and half weeks. Smer considered a coalition with SDKU a non-starter as SDKU would have wanted to continue its rightist reforms and prevented the introduction of Smer-approved "social values". Smer had been open to a partnership with SMK but SMK had insisted that KDH be the third partner. In addition to Smer's difficulty with KDH itself, Smer felt that having two rightist, former-governing parties as coalition partners would weaken its leftist, socialist agenda.

13. (C) By Smer's reckoning, that left only SNS and HZDS as possible partners. This would allow for Smer's "absolute domination" in its coalition. Both parties were pliant, Smer explained, willing to do anything to get into the governing coalition. The internationally distasteful leaders of the parties, Jan Slota and Vladimir Meciar, would sacrifice claims on governmental positions to get their parties into power. (Note: Slota and Meciar retained their elected positions as MPs.) The two parties would even accept fewer ministries than they were proportionally entitled to. Without SNS and HZDS, Smer claims it would have been forced into opposition, thereby relinquishing the chance to implement its social-democratic program.

14. (C) Smer MP Boris Zala told us that the party had a real fear that former PM Dzurinda would have been able to lure

HZDS into a center-right coalition. Smer felt it had to strike fast, albeit obviously with a coalition that displeases even many Smer members.

#### EUROPE IS NOT CONVINCED

15. (U) The Smer-SNS-HZDS coalition agreement explicitly states that the partners will respect the current level of protection of minorities and the relevant Maastricht criteria. Fico gave this same reassurance when addressing the European Parliament on July 5. In addition to the nearly universal condemnation of the Socialist MEPs, the unimpressed conservative faction of the European Parliament has decided to establish a monitoring group to track political developments in Slovakia due to SNS's position in the new government.

16. (U) Private explanations and public assurances aside, the PES openly reproached Smer for accepting a coalition with SNS. PES President Poul Nyrup Rasmussen said that he cannot accept a coalition with extreme right-wing nationalists and warned that Fico risks Europe turning its back on him and his government. Rasmussen has recommended the suspension of Smer's membership in the PES. The Austrian social democratic party (SPO) has announced that they will most likely break contact with Smer, comparing the Fico-Slota-Meciar combination to Wolfgang Schussel and Jorg Haider. Out of 32 PES members, only the Chairman of the Czech socialists (CSSD) Jiri Paroubek spoke up in support of Fico and Smer. The next PES Presidency meeting, which should formally determine Smer's membership status, is not yet scheduled but might be held in October.

#### OTHERS CHIME IN

17. (U) On a less visible plane, the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) has appealed to the European Union, the Council of Europe, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to closely monitor developments in Slovakia vis--vis the Romani population. In large part, the ERRC is concerned that the nationalist SNS party now controls the Ministries of Education and Construction and Regional Development. However, the ERRC points out that each of the three governing parties have publicly made anti-Romani statements, though SNS has made the most frequent and the most recent. The ERRC encourages the three pan-European bodies to take swift action when and where necessary to ensure that all relevant human rights guarantees are upheld.

18. (U) A desire to help buffer his government against international disdain for his governing coalition may have led to Fico's appointment of the respected former Secretary General of the OSCE Jan Kubis as Slovakia's new Foreign Minister.

19. (C) COMMENT. Fico has always stressed that his government's foreign policy will be Eurocentric and criticized his predecessor's strong transatlantic orientation. Membership in international socialist groupings has been important to Fico. Therefore, this rejection by his European partners stings. Fico will have to work hard to ensure that SNS and Meciar's HZDS don't do further damage to his image and credibility.

SILVERMAN